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ABSTRACT

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program was created by the College Board upon the premise that university-level material can be taught successfully to high school students who have outstanding ability plus the motivation to learn. By challenging these students, the Advanced Placement Program accelerates learning and enhances studies at both the high school and university levels. Procedures for selecting students for the program vary from school to school. Course descriptions and examinations for 29 courses in 16 areas have been constructed. The College Board outlines material that is to be studied for each course; however, few guidelines are given as to how that material is to be taught. Teachers need to have an extensive background in their particular area of expertise and willingness to devote large amounts of time to lesson preparation and evaluation of students' work. Advanced Placement examinations are held annually in May, and students have the option of having the College Board report their results to a postsecondary institution of their choice. Colleges and universities which award advanced standing based upon AP examinations generally give credit for grades of four or five on a five-point scale, while some colleges honor the grade of three. (JDD)

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High School and the Advanced Placement Program

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More than thirty-five years ago the College Board created the Advanced Placement (A.P.) Program based upon the premise that university level material can be taught successfully to high school students who have outstanding ability plus the motivation to learn. By challenging these students, the Advanced Placement Program accelerates learning and enhances studies at both the high school and university levels.

BEGINNING AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Students and teachers who are interested in implementing an Advanced Placement Program can become involved by contacting The College Board's Advanced Placement Office in Western Canada (Mr. George Ewonus, Canadian Advanced Placement Coordinator, 212 1755 Springfield Road, Kelowna B.C., V1Y 5V5). A participation form is then to be completed and the registered school will receive Advanced Placement mailings. There are no fees to be paid and no costs to participate in the Advanced Placement Program. A school A.P. Coordinator must also be appointed so that the individual can receive all mailings sent by the College Board.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT SUBJECT OFFERINGS

Course descriptions and examinations for twenty-nine courses in a total of sixteen areas have been constructed. The following courses are presently being offered: history of art, studio art--general portfolio, studio art--drawing portfolio, general biology, general chemistry, computer science A, computer science AB, macroecnomics, microeconomics, English language and composition, English literature and composition, French language level 3, French literature level 3, German language level 3, comparative government and politics,

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United States government and politics, European history, United States History, Vergil, Catullus--Horace, calculus AB, calculus BC, music theory, physics B, physics C--mechanics, physics C--electricity and magnetism, introductory psychology, Spanish language level 3, Spanish literature level 3.

SELECTION OF ADVANCED PLACEMENT STUDENTS

Procedures for selecting students for the Advanced Placement Program vary from school to school. Some schools screen their candidates by having prospective students write standardized tests and written examinations. Other schools accept all students who wish to enter the program regardless of their ability levels. Students who progress well in the program are usually those who are motivated to learn. They are individuals who have the desire to work hard at college-level material and who have above average skills in a particular subject area.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM

The College Board outlines material that is to be studied for each A.P. course; however, few guidelines are given as to how that material is to be taught. Many schools involved in the Advanced Placement Program will first complete the educational tasks associated with their provincial curricula and then will move on to the concepts associated with the A.P. program. The program may be offered at all three high school grade levels, or it may be taught at only one or two levels. These decisions are made by each participating school.

THE SELECTION OF ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEACHERS

Many high school teachers, drawn by the prospect of instructing highly motivated students, will be interested in teaching a course in the Advanced Placement Program. While

this prospect is a reality, there is another less-appealing factor — the heavy workload associated with the program. The College Board provides content guidelines for teachers; however, specific curriculum decisions are the responsibility of individual instructors. In order to make wise curriculum decisions it is necessary that teachers have an extensive background in their particular area of expertise. A teacher new to the field of education may feel intimidated by the tasks associated with teaching Advanced Placement courses. In order to prepare lessons geared to the college level, it is also necessary for teachers to devote large amounts of their own time. When this is combined with the extra hours required for marking the numerous assignments that must be required of the students, the work load may be judged too heavy for some teachers who already have a demanding teaching schedule. Prospective Advanced Placement teachers should thus be knowledgeable in their subject area, and must be prepared to devote a great deal of time to lesson preparation and evaluation of students' work.

Teachers can learn more about instructional methods and techniques by attending Advanced Placement conferences which are held in various centers across Canada. They can also register in workshops and summer school sessions that are sponsored by the College Board. These subject-specific sessions are frequently conducted by experienced A.P. teachers who have had success in teaching the program and who have served as examination readers.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMINATIONS

Advanced Placement examinations are held annually, at the beginning of May. These three-hour examinations are administered in the students' own schools and take place according to a schedule set up by the College Board.

A fee of approximately seventy U.S. dollars is charged for each examination that is ordered; however, if examinations are not written, they can be returned unopened and a refund will be given. In June, high school and college instructors are brought together to evaluate the free-response parts of the Advanced Placement examinations. These readers are appointed by the Educational Testing Service and are trained by their subject's Chief Reader.

THE REPORTING OF EXAMINATION RESULTS

After the free-response and multiple-choice sections of the examinations have been weighted and combined, the grades are reported based upon a five-point scale, as follows: 5 - extremely well qualified, 4 - well qualified, 3 - qualified, 2 - possibly qualified, 1 - no recommendation.

Colleges and universities which award advanced standing based upon A.P. examinations give credit for grades of four or five, while some colleges honor the grade of three. In recent years, more than one third of the A.P candidates earned grades of four or higher, one third received a grade of three, one fifth received a grade of two, and nine percent received the grade of one.

Students are mailed their results in mid-July and they have the option of having the College Board report their results to a post-secondary institution of their choice.

SUMMATION

The Advanced Placement Program is operating successfully in thousands of schools throughout North America and the world. It is of particular value when high school students feel a need for a challenge, and when teachers feel a responsibility to develop their students' potential to the utmost.

References

The College Board. A Guide to the Advanced Placement Program, for May 1993. Princeton, NJ: Advanced Placement Program, 1992.